Liberation, Equality and Diversity in the context of Quality Students’ Unions

SU16

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If you only focus on Liberation, Equality and Diversity, not only will you be a better organisation, but we can prove it through Quality Students’ Unions
What is QSU?

- The quality model for students’ unions
- Allows unions to compare themselves against a sector-supported framework
- Moves away from best practice to context specific
- It has been developed by students’ unions and is delivered by NUS with external overview
- It is managed by NUS Charitable Services with an advisory group looking at it in more detail
- Endorsed by HEFCE, QAA, UUK, GuildHE, the Leadership Foundation
Today’s context

- We are only looking at Part B Criteria as Part A is compliance
- However, one of the criteria for Part A is having an E&D policy, so if you haven’t got one of those...
- Only looking at Excellent
Part B - Criteria

- Strategic Planning
- Relationships & Partnerships
- Governance
- Democracy
- People
- Communication
- Services
- Participation
- Representation & Campaigning
- Review & Evaluation
- Context
- Impact
Strategic Planning

The union has a strategic plan that has the needs of its members, both current and future, at its very core.

The union has a statement of its purpose, presented in a format that is accessible to all. The union can demonstrate how its vision and values are an integral part of its day-to-day activities.

The vision, values and strategic objectives are clearly and unambiguously linked to the actual current context in which the union operates.

The union’s overall strategic plan is fully understood by its elected officers, staff, members and stakeholders. These stakeholder groups feel they have been closely consulted in the development of the plan and can describe how they were involved in developing the strategy.

The union can demonstrate that its plan sets out priorities for the union and helps to determine how resources are allocated.
The central importance to the union of its relationships and connections with its members is apparent and implicit through everything the union does. The union can demonstrate that it invests in constantly improving these links, with clear decisions being made about allocating resources to forming relationships with unengaged members and deepening relationships with engaged members. There are specific strategies to form relationships with hard-to-reach and/or under-represented groups. As a result of this work, the union has built strong relationships across its entire membership and members feel an affinity to the union.

The union always considers how key stakeholders perceive it, and how this perception is managed – this may take the form of a written reputation management strategy.

The union has proactively built and maintained strong relationships or partnerships with all of its stakeholders, which provides benefits to its members. This is reinforced by effective networking beyond the student movement – the union has developed strong and highly beneficial relationships with other, non-stakeholder organisations. As a result, there are numerous examples of partnerships that have provided real and tangible benefits to the union’s members.

Internal relationships between staff and officers are strong, resulting in significant inter-working and demonstrable synergies.
The union has structures in place, including a strong board, trustee body and/or representative bodies with clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities, which actively enhance its ability to deliver strong, wide-ranging outcomes. The elected or appointed officials are specifically and effectively trained, continually developed and feel very able to undertake their role(s).

The union widely communicates its strategic plan annually in a way that is accessible and understood by its stakeholders. The union’s members have strong awareness of its plans and are able to link the plan to their own needs.
The union can demonstrate that it exists to represent the opinions, and serve the needs, of its members. As a result, members are at the heart of the union and the democratic principles of inclusiveness, student control, considered judgement and transparency are fundamental to everything the union does.

The union has put in place a number of effective initiatives to ensure that members from under-represented groups become engaged in union elections and decision-making. As a result, the candidates and electorate at the most recent election reflect the diversity of the union’s membership – as does the makeup of the union’s central decision-making body and those who participate in it.
The Information given by the union to its members is a fundamental component of ensuring that the union operates as a democracy. This information is accessible, relevant and timely to ensure that members can contribute to the union’s decision-making processes in an informed way. Members are therefore able to make considered judgements when voting in elections and making decisions. The union is able to demonstrate that it enables members to consider the views of other members before making a decision.

The union’s members feels that they fully understand how to participate in union democracy

Members are able to raise their objections if they don’t feel represented.

The democratic system is appropriate in terms of its demands on the time and participation of its members.
People

The union has a culture that welcomes continuous learning and development of all staff equally. There are development opportunities for staff at all levels and all staff are actively encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge.

Succession planning has been considered and may be outlined in a formal written document. As a result, succession plan training and development has been delivered to individual members of staff across the entire range of staff positions.

Recruitment processes embrace equality of opportunity and detailed scrutiny so that the workforce is talented and diverse, with shared values that can be demonstrated.

The union can demonstrate that voluntary staff are a very important aspect of the organisation and are highly valued. Appropriate systems that are in place for career staff are also used for volunteers. The union is able to demonstrate how it trains and develops volunteer staff. Voluntary staff feel valued and engaged in union beyond their job role.
Key messages are conveyed using a range of communication methods over extended periods of time. There is a clear link between members’ input/feedback and action. As a result, members feel they can effectively contribute to their union.

The union’s communications are specific to the needs of its membership. Typically, the union uses tailored communication methods based on contexts and messages specifically designed to reach different groups of students, including methods to target hard-to-reach members.

The union has very high levels of consistency in the messages that it communicates, which continuously reinforce its brand.
The services offered by the union are linked to the current needs of its members. As a result of the union’s approach all the services it provides are well used and highly valued by its members. The union can demonstrate that it delivers effective, high-quality services. Staff in each service area are aware of feedback and KPIs have been set. The union is able to demonstrate that in all areas it is focused on providing the very best service it can to members. This high level of customer service is very apparent. As a result, members are very satisfied with each service. There are mechanisms in place to consider the best delivery mechanism for services, to ensure that the highest level of quality is achieved.

The union operates its services in a complementary way that prevents internal competition or conflict while promoting a strong brand. As a whole there is a sense that each individual service, however it is delivered, is cohesive with all other services to bring about an overall synergy.
Participation

The union is able to demonstrate that it has dedicated time and resources to developing participation opportunities and promoting exciting opportunities to all its members. The union also has specific strategies to promote participation opportunities to under-represented and traditionally hard-to-reach groups. As a result, a broad range of students actively participates in the union. Additionally, there may be examples where this promotion of participation has led to an individual members engaging with the union for the first time.

The union has clear strategies to improve the scale of participation in union activities and develops its members to enable them to participate as effectively as possible. The union can show that it proactively supports its members to participate in national campaigns, encouraging and facilitating individuals and groups of members to take part. Members feel very strongly that the union is ‘their’ union and know how they can participate in all aspects of the union.
The union can demonstrate that its elected officers are able to make highly effective, accurate representations/interventions at institution committee meetings by having an evidence-based understanding of the views of union members on major issues. In response to members’ views, the union is able to demonstrate that its elected officers proactively raise issues at committee meetings or through informal networking. As a result, student perspectives are accurately communicated and considered when major decisions are made. The union can demonstrate a number of impacts that have been a direct result of this representation. The union proactively encourages individual members and groups of members to run campaigns. The availability of this support is well communicated. The union can demonstrate robust mechanisms to improve the effectiveness of member-led campaigns, often by providing training and/or advice. Union-supported campaigns have a defined objective or impact and the union is able to point to successful past campaigns.
The union has a strong understanding of its own performance and how it impacts upon its members.

The union uses sophisticated evaluation tools that provide detailed information on performance and areas for improvement. These tools are accessible and aid detailed scrutiny and opportunities to challenge actions through the governance body.
The union has a range of mechanisms in place to continually examine the wants, needs and perceptions of its members. It has developed ways to canvass the opinions of its members and has specific strategies to target traditionally hard-to-reach groups. The union has also considered other outside factors that will affect its current and future members. These may include the availability of housing, employment and finances.

The union can demonstrate that it has dedicated time and resources to forecast the needs of future students. It may also have evidence of the results of this foresight being incorporated into its strategic plan. The union is able to clearly show that it is able to react and adapt to changes in its members’ views and needs. The union’s structures, procedures and processes have inbuilt flexibilities that allow the union to continuously evolve to meet the future needs of its members.
The union has a strong focus on delivering impacts for its members. Everyone in the union is mindful of, and focused on, the impact(s) they are trying to achieve.

The union has an understanding of how the culmination of activities creates impact at a higher level and is able to demonstrate detailed examples.

The union makes use of simple measurement tools to determine the scale of each impact. As a result, the union has detailed knowledge of where its activities have been most effective and created the greatest impact.

The union’s members are able to identify a number of ways in which the union has positively impacted upon them individually. As a result, members understand how the union makes a positive contribution to them personally as well as to others.

The union can demonstrate impacts that have enriched its parent institution, its local community and the national movement.
Group Task

What activities / planning do you do in your union which could add to the organisation’s progression through Quality Students’ Unions?
Feedback

Sharing ideas is really important for Quality Students’ Unions as much as it is for the movement more generally.

These ideas will be collated and added to the improvement of QSU plan.
What’s next for QSU?

This is the picture as it stands
QSU criteria will be fundamentally overhauled by summer 2017
The focus of this is to raise the bar on existing practice
It is likely to include LED as a core part of this improvement process
November 3rd there will be regionalised QSU workshop days
What we’ve looked at

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Any Questions?

www.qualitystudentsunions.org.uk

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